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ABSTRACT

An alternative framework that supports the collaboration of principals and teachers, with a focus on the changing roles of teachers and principals as learners and leaders, is presented. A conclusion is that as teachers' belief systems change to respect the image of the learner, principals' belief systems also change to reflect a new image of the teacher. Teachers' and principals' adaptive practices and beliefs thus contribute to a new theory of teaching and learning. A recommendation is made for the generation of a collaborative model of teaching and learning that respects the autonomy and integrity of all learners. (28 references) (LMI)

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WHO TEACHES, WHO PRINCIPALS, WHO LEARNS?

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by

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INTRODUCTION

THE NEED FOR COLLABORATION

The purpose of education is to help students become "self-directed, problem solvers" (Ministry of Education of Ontario) who act wisely and feel deeply, within an environment that challenges the individual to look beyond her/himself and experience the value of interdependence. In a complex world of increasingly alienated individuals and seemingly insurmountable problems, there is a need for renewed focus on the connectedness of people to act as a framework for individual freedom. There is a need within society for a high level of human collaboration to address real problems and improve the human condition. Within the structure of schools, there is a need to place equal emphasis on the values of independence and interdependence. A belief in the value of the individual within an interdependent ethos can help to energize and sustain the individual human spirit.

Traditionally, schools have been organized on the authority principle (Bolin, 1989), where "administrators must take over and establish a stable social order" (p. 84, 1989). The theme of this paper proposes an alternative framework that supports the mutual accommodation of principals and teachers as educators and leaders within their profession.

> "Central to my conception of a good school and a healthy workplace is community. In particular ... a school that could be described as a community of learners, a place where students and adults alike are engaged as active learners in matters of special importance to them and where everyone is thereby encouraging everyone else's learning. And ... a school that could be described as a community of leaders, where students, teachers, parents and administrators share the opportunities and responsibilities for making decisions that affect all the occupants of the schoolhouse." (Barth, 1990, p. 9)

This paper addresses the changing roles of teachers and principals as learners and leaders within a "good school" where every detail of life in classrooms is enhanced by collaboration.

KNOWLEDGE, BELIEFS AND LIFE IN CLASSROOMS

The instructional practices and learning experiences in a classroom are manifestations of the kinds of interactions that occur between teachers and students. The combination of factors involved presents a portrait of teacher beliefs, knowledge and understanding of the nature of learning, the purpose of education and the effect their actions have upon children.

The world as it is represented in a classroom plays out what teachers know and believe about the human qualities that are inherent in the whole educated, social and literate person. Their knowledge and beliefs give substance and form to their interactions with students, and to their educational decision-making.

The society of the classroom is encompassed in the larger community of the school where the daily lives of teachers and students can be enhanced or limited by the principal's beliefs, knowledge and consequent actions. The nature of teachers' and principals' experiences, actions and beliefs creates an interdependent dynamic that can nurture and enrich a learning environment. The struggle for higher levels of collaboration between teachers and principals is a theme woven throughout this paper, and one that emerges from a vision of what a learning community can be. Such an endeavour requires an understanding of the direction of the changes occurring in education and the mutuality of intent needed between and among educators.

CHANGE: A VIEW OF KNOWLEDGE, THEN AND NOW

Changes in beliefs about the meaning of the act of learning, and thus consequent actions in classrooms, can reveal perspectives that teachers and principals hold about their responsibilities to the learner and to one another.

Throughout the past 30 years there has been a transformation of life in classrooms. The changes represent shifts in knowledge and beliefs about the process of learning, the nature of the child, and the role of the teacher from transmitter of knowledge to facilitator and decision-maker. What is happening is not

limited to the world of education, it is a reflection of an evolution of beliefs that portray the human individual as an integration of physical, social, intellectual, emotional and experiential qualities.

The changes in our classrooms have evolved as the result of two sets of factors; one of which is external to the school system and one which is at the very heart of life in schools/classrooms.

Certainly, the social, economic and political forces which drive all elements of society have had and continue to have their effect on the climate of education. In the early 60's these forces combined to seek new definitions of the human individual and within that exploration, new definitions of learning and the learner. In doing so, the rigid and narrow structures of the transmission model were rejected in favour of a more humanistic, personal model. The permeation of a more liberal philosophy and world view combined with the availability of economic resources to create a school climate where freedom, individual satisfaction and self-actualization were seen as essential elements of a child's education. These external forces have brought about tangible, physical changes in schools over the past thirty years. Schools and classrooms are now larger, brighter spaces filled with varied learning materials, technological equipment and visual aids.

However, the work of researchers and theorists from interdisciplinary fields has had a more powerful effect on the daily lives of learners. The child as a learner has been re-examined by academic and professional sources, and for the first time in the history of schools, there is a consensus of interdisciplinary knowledge and theory about the nature of learning. Cognitive psychologists have challenged the validity of the transmission model with the idea that all knowledge is constructed from within and that the learner is the active party in any teaching situation. (Piaget, 1968). This powerful principle forms the foundation which enables the contributing findings about learning from other disciplines to come together in a new definition of learning. From the field of psychology we also have overwhelming evidence of the importance of self - concept in the learning process. (Maslow, 1971).

From the field of linguistics we know that all children have proven their capacity for learning before they come to school, by successfully acquiring their native language through means of their own resources. (Chomsky, 1964). The fields of Sociology and Anthropology contribute information about the social contexts necessary for learning and about the primacy of family and community in forming the basis of children's image of themselves, and their relationships to others and the world. These vital pieces of research, information and thinking from the various disciplines weave a whole fabric of knowledge about learning to

which schools and teachers must respond.

The overwhelming nature of the quantity and complexity of this information has resulted in a major challenge to all educators. This challenge makes particularly heavy demands on teachers who in spite of all the intricacies of educational bureaucracies, serve as the front line of any school system. All elements of our society demand that teachers respond to the complexity of the learner with a new and more sophisticated pedagogy. Teachers have been expected to incorporate the new information and integrate the theories into their everyday classroom practice. They have been asked to enact programs, approaches and materials which honour the re-constituted image of the learner as an autonomous, self-directed, self-motivated being who makes sense of the world in his/her own unique and personal manner, At the heart of these demands is the overriding requirement that teaches change - i.e. change their knowledge base, their views about children and learning, their beliefs about how learning happens and how it is best initiated, supported and sustained. The professional literature on change, innovation and implementation (Fullan and Park, 1981) reiterates the essential need for this type of change in the deeper structures of teacher's thinking.

HOW TEACHERS HAVE RESPONDED TO THESE DEMANDS

There is much evidence in the literature to suggest that education as a profession has not responded to these demands in any systematic way. (Goodlad, 1984). However, there is evidence in the reflection of individual teachers to indicate that these demands have been heard and that some teachers have initiated a process which will enable them to change some aspects of their practice and their thinking to correspond more closely with the needs of the learner. These reflections reveal that it is individual teachers, rather than school systems who try to incorporate into their belief systems and implement in their classrooms the knowledge and information which re-defines the learner. It would appear that the catalyst for change is not an external force or a system plan, rather it appears to arrive for each teacher as the result of some isolated action or experience.

In a survey of teachers enroled in an in-service course, (O'Reilly, 1988) teachers described their own personal journeys toward change. In examining teachers' responses, we gain some insight into the various elements of the journey and the "critical incidents" which cause teachers to begin to see themselves as learners. Some teachers described the delivery of a new board curriculum or a transfer to a new school as their first indication that change was necessary. Other teachers heard phrases such as "Child-centred", "Whole Language" or "Inquiry

learning" and set out to find the meaning of these terms. For some teachers the precipitating action came from returning to the profession after years of hiatus. The experience of being assigned to an "empty " classroom, devoid of the traditional trappings of text-books and work books or the sudden "gift" of a budget for classroom materials were also precipitating factors. Many teachers described the discovery of a "kindred spirit" on staff or in the classroom next door as a primary impetus to begin the search for new knowledge.

These experiences illustrate the fact that teachers have indeed responded to the demand for change, but they have done so on a personal, individual basis, as result of their own perceptions and needs.

The changes which follow these initiating incidents can be seen in the visible features of many classrooms. The arrangement of desks/tables in groups, the presence of learning centres, writing folders, and computers attest to the fact the learner as "passive receiver" is no longer a predominating belief. However, changes in the underlying features of teachers' knowledge and beliefs are not as visible. Indeed, when teachers were asked to describe these changes, they most often did so in relation to a particular classroom practice rather than in a clearly articulated belief statement. Some teachers talked of changing from basal reader programs to more literature based reading

programs. A change from a teacher-directed writing program with prescribed topics and the demand for correct spelling and grammar to a "process writing" approach which focuses on giving the control of content and ideas to the writer was frequently mentioned. New beliefs in the ability of the learner to "learn through discovery centres" to which they bring "their own interests and ideas" were expressed as were beliefs in the importance of young childrens' play in their learning. To an informed observer, these changes in practice can be linked to the specific knowledge and beliefs which inform them, but changes in external features of the classroom do not constitute evidence of change in beliefs.

Teachers who described changes in their roles appeared to go beyond the surface features of cosmetic change to make closer connections with the theoretical underpinnings of their practice. In their statements about changing roles, teachers described a shift from a transmission model of teaching, e.g.

> "Then I taught children how to read, now children teach themselves to read; I provide the environment."
>
> "I had to teach them everything, if the teacher left out a concept, the child would never learn it, now I see that children know a lot more than I thought."
>
> "I arrange things so they can teach themselves."
>
> "The teacher provides materials so that children can pursue their interests."

These statements signify movement toward a belief in the child as a capable, self-directed learner and suggest that the image of the learner is changing not only in the external world, but in the mind of the teacher as well.

Values and beliefs about knowledge, learning and human interaction are integral to meaningful, real interactions in a classroom. Such an assertion receives support from research concerning the relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom practices. (Harman, 1967; Wlodarczyk, 1972). Harman (1967) and Postman and Weingartner (1969) emphasize the idea that society is affected by, and perhaps even characterized by the prevailing assumptions and values underlying the nature of human kind and its environment.

But how can fundamental changes in belief systems be facilitated within the current system? How do these changes happen?

Once teachers recognize the need for the change, for the most part they seem to respond out of their own initiative to the efforts of school boards and universities to provide in-service sessions, courses and conferences. They give evidence, by their enrolment in these activities of their desire to know, to learn and to make sense of the new pedagogy. In this milieu, teachers

have been informed by professional literature, workshops, lectures and video demonstrations and above all by the opportunity to discuss their views, ideas, problems and solutions with colleagues. However, the research on teacher change enphasizes repeatedly that information is not enough. The transmission model which is no longer relevant to children is similarly no longer relevant to teachers. "We must recognize that learning takes place from the inside out, not the outside in. Neither teachers nor those they teach then change simply by giving them information, by being told about theory and research or new approaches. Unfortunately, we often equate knowledge with information... Information is necessary, but it is not a sufficient condition for change." (Jaggar, 1988, p. 78).

While courses and conferences may inform teachers they do not change practices or beliefs. In a study of teachers in New York and Texas, Greenlaw and Jagger found that even though 75% of the teachers surveyed had taken courses in Children's Literature, over 60% stated that they rarely or never used literature in their reading programs. Similarly in the in-service survey, one teacher who expressed a belief in real language activities and in the centrality of meaning in reading, still described her intention to use "fewer" dittoes" and place "less emphasis on phonics." Her statements suggest that the information about how reading is learned has not been fully internalized and re-constructed as knowledge. In essence, this teacher will make

concessions to a new definition of reading while retaining the trappings of the old. While the artifacts of the reading program will indicate a shift away from a transmission model, the teacher's knowledge and beliefs will not yet include the information now available about the process of learning to read. In other words the teacher's belief system has not yet been fully formed.

In the following passage, one teacher described the complete journey to a changed belief system, and thereby provides a map which educators can examine in order to ascertain the routes and conditions necessary for change:

> "I confess. I started out as a creationist. The first days of every school year I created; for the next thirty-six weeks I maintained my creation. My curriculum. From behind my big desk I set it in motion, managed and maintained it all year long. I wanted to be a great teacher, systematic, purposeful, in control. I wanted great results from my great practices. And I wanted to convince other teachers that this creation was superior stuff. So I studied my curriculum, conducting research designed to show its wonders. I didn't learn in the classroom, I tended and taught my creation. These days, I learn in my classroom. What happens there has changed; it continually changes, I've become an evolutionist, and the curriculum unfolds now as my kids and I learn together. My aims stay constant--I want us to go deep inside language, using it to know and shape and play with our worlds--but my practices evolve as my students and I go deeper. This going deeper is research, and these days my research shows me the wonders of my kids, not my methods. But it has also bought me full circle. What I learn with these students, collaborating with them as a writer and reader who wonders about writing and reading, makes me a better teacher--not great maybe, but at least grounded in the logic of learning, and growing."

(Atwell, 1985)

CONDITIONS FOR CHANGE

The experience of teachers tells us that the journey from "creationist to evolutionist" involves much more than courses, workshops and readings. It requires a lengthy process of thinking and re-thinking, of engaging in new actions and interactions and many hours of reflection on the nature and essence of both teaching and learning. Atwell says:

> "I didn't intuit or luck into this place, and I didn't arrive overnight. I paved the way through writing and reading about writing, through uncovering and questioning my assumptions, through observing kids and trying to make sense of my observations, through dumb mistakes, uncertain experiments, and, underneath it all, the desire to do my best by my kids." (Atwell, 1987, p. 4).

This brief glimpse of teachers efforts and initiatives supports the notion that changes in knowledge, beliefs and attitudes - the really permanent and lasting changes which go beyond the classroom artifacts require a set of conditions which teachers themselves are powerless to provide. If belief systems are to change, teachers need a climate which supports and sustains them as learners. When in - service teachers were asked what they needed to maintain and enhance their learning they listed three major requirements: contact with other teachers, supportive administration and opportunities to attend workshops and conferences. These elements require the co-operation and

collaboration of school administrations and give the principal as school leader the major responsibility for establishing a climate supportive of teacher learning and teacher change.

THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

In order to create such a climate it is essential that principals be allowed to remove themselves from the traditional hierarchical model which places teachers and principals in adversarial, power-related roles. Traditionally,

> "Schools are organized on the authority principle ... and teachers are in an ambiguous relationship with administrators." (Bolin, p. 85, 1989)

Just as the belief systems of teachers are changing to respect the image of the learner, the belief systems of principals are changing to reflect a new image of the teacher.

PRINCIPALS: HOW THEN IS TEACHER CHANGE FACILITATED

What then do principals who promote teacher growth, value? In a recent study, principals who were identified as valuing the human need to grow, tended to indicate beliefs in the value of the self-directed, self-reliant teacher. (Armstrong-Latimer, 1984). Consistency of action of principals in this study seemed

to be demonstrated by those who tended to value the empowerment of teachers. Of the principals who were interviewed for this study those who valued the attributes of self-direction and self-reliance made statements that validated their need to operate from a consistent set of values:

> " ... the expression of my values (to the teachers) is a kind of fulcrum for my behaviour ... "
>
> "You can't do this job without convictions about learning and about people ... When teachers have a sense of how knowledgeable they are, marvellous things happen in the classroom."

These statements portray a changed view of teachers on the part of principals. These principals believed in teachers, and their knowledge, they did not see themselves as just managers, instead they saw themselves as co-learners, working <u>with</u> teachers toward a potential of possibility, i.e., a vision of what learning can be.

The terms "teachers and principals" encompass more than roles to be played; teachers and principals are people with life experiences and accumulated knowledge which can cause them to change their view of the world and subsequently their actions. The changed views of teachers result from the creation of a set of conditions provided and protected by the principal as school leader. These conditions, summarized by Jagger (1989, p. 78) support the needs articulated by teachers surveyed:

1) Teachers need time--time to observe students and one another, and time to read, think about, and discuss new ideas from theory and research in order to determine what they mean for curriculum and instruction.
2) Teachers need the freedom to take risks and to experiment with new ideas, materials, techniques, and approaches.
3) Teachers need opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and other professionals on new projects and to develop solutions to common problems. They also need real support and assistance, not evaluation and judgement from administrators.
4) Most important, teachers need a work environment that is conducive to reflective thinking and that encourages dialogue among professionals who are given the power to act upon their own decisions as curriculum planners (Glickman, 1985).

This need to articulate, share and support personal needs and learning within the context of change is the essence of real and natural collaboration. Teachers and principals need to talk about their respective visions, the obstacles they perceive, and the contributions they make to the vision, and to the obstacles.

Within the context of this collaboration it is reasonable to suggest that principals re-structure their roles to allow for co-

learning with teachers. Perhaps instead of merely giving teachers time to observe, read and think, principals could take the time to engage in these activities with teachers, to work side by side with teachers "carefully observing the children they teach, by attending in-service sessions along with teachers, by going into classrooms and working directly with children." (Pinell, 1989, p. 116). Perhaps instead of merely giving teachers freedom to take risks, principals could take risks right along with the teacher. In this way principals and teachers can work together to connect the theory and the practice, to help each other question, understand and articulate the complexities of the learning they see before them in the children, and in which they themselves engage.

Ouchi (1981) talks about people in organizations being connected through an espoused philosophy. Peter Block (1988) believes that all wise leaders operate from a vision of how it could be. Both premises involve the active, conscious articulation of the dream. The substance of the dream of which we speak emerges from the interdependent actions of the principal and her teachers in service to the children.

Within such a framework people ask questions of one another and of themselves. The questions are grounded in the concept of empowerment; they emerge from a view of the world and humanity that encourages belief in possibilities and letting go of the

problem-oriented programming of our culture.

They are questions that provide the ground and nurturance for theory building in the classroom. The analysis of the intent of the questions reveals a shift of perspective about the role of educator, whether teacher or principal, from passive recipients of reform to active protagonists:

- in this school, .. do we view learning as a shared entity?
- do we each have a dream of what learning and education can do for individuals and for groups?
- do we value the importance of using the dreams as frameworks for action?
- do we value empowering people throughout the school and community, whatever role they play within the process?
- do people accept responsibility for their own learning?
- do we treat individuals as significant people in the course of daily life in this school?
- do we believe that educators always act in the best interests of students and their learning?
- do we value the well-being and personal concerns of the people?
- do we value taking a personal interest in the professional growth and learning of one another?

- do we understand and value honesty and congruency in words, actions and beliefs?
- do we value commitment to highest ethical convictions?
- do we believe that individuals are worthy in their uniqueness?
- do we value and respect the body of knowledge and theory about learning and teaching currently available?
- do we each recognize our assumptions about what constitutes healthy interactions in classrooms?

Each of the preceding questions requires authentic dialogue (Bolin, 1989), where: "all participants contribute their own best thinking ... which will include their expertise (knowledge) and experience." (p. 86). If teachers and principals engage in the quality of dialogue implicit in the preceding questions, the foundation is established for the same kind of interaction and collaboration to occur in the classroom between teachers and students.

Teachers and principals are able to create a framework of mutuality, by being aware of themselves and one another, by honouring their respective views of the world and by engaging in joint activities that complement real learning. Gordon Wells (1990) believes that collaborative construction of meaning through social interaction is the issue of schooling, knowledge is in the minds of the people who know. A state of understanding

is achieved through assisting one another to articulate, change, enact and try out beliefs, with the intent to facilitate learning and human growth within the community known as school.

Pinell (1989, p. 117) suggests that principals discuss theory with teachers and that they avoid the pitfall of defining teaching as a "collection of ideas." The activity of teaching in classrooms is in reality the construction of a theoretical framework and belief system, by each individual teacher. From the experiences of teachers we know that each teacher responds to the demand for change out of a personal, individual recognition of need. From the new definitions of learning, we know that each learner must construct her/his own knowledge out of the "raw material" of experience and information. From the literature or pedagogy and practice we know that the conditions for learning must respect and provide for the process of construction to occur. As teachers provide these conditions in their classrooms, principals can provide the conditions which enable and empower teachers in their construction of a belief system which is based on the best of what is known about learning and children.

As teachers change their practices and beliefs they are in effect, building a new theory of teaching and learning. There is no greater service a principal can perform than to become a collaborative partner in building this theory.

"Every teacher must become his/her own theory

> builder, but a builder of theory that grows out of practice and has as its aim to improve the quality of practice." (G. Wells, 1986, p. 221)

True collaboration reveals a level of knowledge about oneself, about the purposes of learning, about human interactions that remove the people from the fixation of self-interest and transports them into the role of enablers. These are the educators who transform; this is the classroom where the teacher is learner and the student is teacher; this is the school where all people are encouraged to be autonomous, to test limits, to explore frontiers and to understand the mutuality of learning.

The re-defined image of the learner can and should be broadened to include the space, time and materials for principals and teachers to engage in the act of building theory together. Together, principals and teachers can examine the foundations of their practice and can articulate to themselves, their colleagues, the parents and the community a coherent rationale for a model of teaching and learning which respects the autonomy, humanity and integrity of all the learners in the school.

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